

Preparation

by Way of Confession

2nd Sunday of Advent – Year A

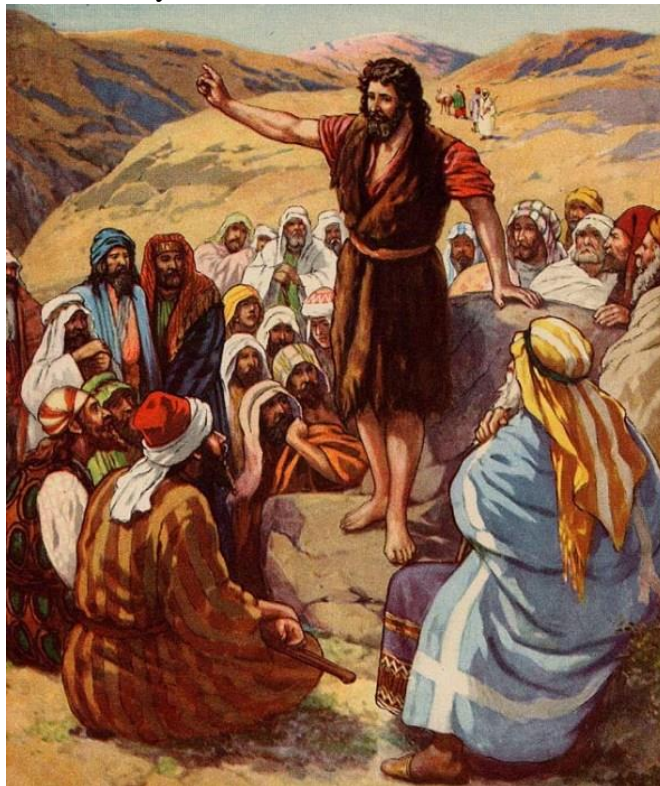
Isaiah 11:1-10
Psalms 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17

Romans 15:4-9
Matthew 3:1-12

In the days following the Thanksgiving Day weekend, our society, for the most part, is immersed up to its neck in what many consider to be rampant mass consumption as shoppers flock the stores and markets, looking for that perfect bargain, engaged in the rampant frenzy of a season when people are driven by a spirit of generosity, hoping to move their friends and loved ones with the perfect gift. It is a time of rapid shifting from a banquet of thanks, to the preparation for however they celebrate the Christmas holy day.

In the midst of it all, as almost a counter, if not parallel observance, we as a Catholic Church enter into the solemn observations of the Holy Season of Advent; observations that can, at times, find themselves drowned out by the hustle and bustle of the shopping, decorating and overall preparation for Christmas. In it, we enter into a season in which, instead of jumping right

into the Christmas spirit, we pace ourselves in a steady progression, leading up to the solemnity of the Incarnation of Christ.



We remember, first of all, the newness of the New Liturgical Year, in which we, as Church, get a six-week head start on the next year (the rest of the world will catch up on January 1). We eventually turn our focus to the celebration of the Incarnation, with the beginning of the Octave before Christmas, which starts on the 17th day of December, bringing us to the very threshold of the Christmas Solemnity itself.

We observe the early days of Advent, however, not focusing on the Incarnation, the *First Coming* of Christ, which we celebrate at Advent's conclusion. Instead, we remember our true Advent as followers of Christ. We await, not the First, but the *Second Coming*. The readings of Mass, both daily and on Sunday, carry with it the theme, not

"Prepare the Way of the Lord"

of the Incarnation, but of the Eschaton; the final Return of Jesus in Glory and the grand finale of God's overarching plan of Salvation.

Part of these early stages of Advent is hearing, as we do every year, the Gospel story, not of Jesus, but of John the Baptist; the "*voice of one crying out in the desert*" to "*prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.*" In the spirit of John and of his call, which echoes down to us through the centuries, we too are called to prepare for that day of the Lord's return. In addition to the distinctive appearance, so vividly described in the Gospel stories of his appearance in the desert, the means whereby we "make straight" the paths that "prepare the way" are likewise clearly described.

It is through repentance of our sins, and obtaining forgiveness by means of confession that we most effectively "prepare the way of the Lord." Just as we see in the Gospel accounts of Holy Scripture, the followers of John came from throughout the entire region to be baptized in the Jordan "as they acknowledged their sins." We,

the baptized, are also called to repeatedly return to the great sacrament given to us by Christ to participate in the ongoing preparation by first and foremost acknowledging, repenting and confessing our sins.

Let us resolve, therefore, in these early days of our New Liturgical Year to "prepare the way of the Lord" by our own acknowledgement and repentance of our sins. Let us hear the voice of John the Baptist, the "voice crying out in the wilderness", continue to call us to "make straight" the way of the Lord. Let us who are Baptized, follow upon the commitment of our faith, to engage in ongoing conversion of our lives as we come before the Lord in the Sacrament of Confession to receive the forgiveness of our sins, as we observe our continual Advent, as we await the Return of Christ in Glory.

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